

DRAFT MINUTES

*These are the Draft Minutes of the Agenda Conference
of the North Plainfield Borough Council held on Monday, 13 September 2021.*

*Every attempt has been made to make these as comprehensive
and conclusive as possible. However, as it is a draft document, it is
not to be construed as a formal depiction of the official conduct of business and is
subject to revision up to and following the Governing Body's actual approval of same.
If changes are necessary, revised minutes will be posted to the website.*

MINUTES of the Agenda Conference (virtual) of the Council of the Borough of North Plainfield held on Monday, **September 13, 2021** at 7:31 p.m. via Zoom.

PRESENT:

Council Members: Aimee Corzo
Suzette Given
Steven McIntyre
Everett Merrill
Keiona R. Miller
Wendy Schaefer
Frank "Skip" Stabile, Council President

Also Present: Lawrence La Ronde, Mayor
David Hollod, Business Administrator
Phil George, Esq., Associate Borough Attorney
Richard K. Phoenix, RMC, Borough Clerk
Stephanie Sherwood, RMC, CMR, Deputy Clerk

Council President Stabile read the following Notice of Compliance:

"This virtual meeting is being held in compliance with N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 et seq. Adequate notice of this meeting was provided by transmitting notice to the official newspapers of the Borough, The Courier News, WKMB Radio, WJLP-TV, the Alternative Press and also to the Star Ledger on December 28, 2020 and by posting a copy of this notice on the bulletin boards in the Municipal Building and the Memorial Library reserved for such purpose."

The Pledge to the Flag was led by Mr. Phoenix.

All then joined in a moment of silence for the Men and Women serving in our Armed Forces as well as the victims of the September 11, 2001 terror attacks and those affected by Tropical Storm Ida.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Janice Allen, 83 Willow Avenue, North Plainfield, reported that the North Plainfield Forum in conjunction with North Plainfield FISH put together a plan to provide lunch to those affected by Tropical Storm Ida and did so for seventy-five families. Somerset County will spray for mosquitoes as several residents have expressed health and safety concerns.

Francine Gargano, 57 Willow Avenue, North Plainfield, called to question why the emergency alert system was not activated to notify residents of the flooding.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. **Proposed 2021 Capital Projects** – D.E.H. Mr. Hollod reported the bond ordinances would be delayed until next meeting due to the unexpected costs associated with the cleanup costs from Tropical Storm Ida.

2. **Hurricane IDA Post-Storm Update** – D.E.H. (Jim DiPaolo, OEM Director and Pat DeBlasio, CFO to be present). Deputy Chief DiPaolo detailed the devastation caused by Tropical Storm Ida, including the numerous water rescues. The Fire and Police Departments as well as the Department of Public Works did a great job. It was amazing that there were no storm related deaths as over three hundred residences and businesses were impacted, including one basement foundation collapse rendering the house unfit for habitation. Over four hundred thousand dollars (\$400,000) in damages were sustained to Borough buildings including the Recreation office, the Department of Public Works building, and the Community Center. The Fire Department's ladder truck and ambulance were damaged while the Department of Public Works lost lawn equipment and the Police Department lost two trailers. Cleanup is underway with the most challenging aspect being the two to three-hour wait times to unload the items at the Plainfield Municipal Utilities Authority station on Rock Avenue. We are looking into updating the emergency alert system to include weather alerts from NOAA. NOAA broadcasts are now being relayed by the Borough's 1630-AM emergency station. Mr. Phoenix is looking into the technology to allow for instant NOAA alert broadcasts. The data provided by Somerset County did not anticipate the rain totals we experienced which added to the difficulties experienced that night.

Mr. DeBlasio explained that the two resolutions before the Council tonight authorize the projected eight hundred thousand dollars (\$800,000) for the cleanup. We will pay approximately one hundred and sixty thousand dollars (\$160,000) over the next five years, with insurance and FEMA monies offsetting up to seventy-five percent of that.

Mr. Merrill thanked Deputy Chief DiPaolo for his report. The Council Vice President noted the benefit of a paid Fire Department, specifically their response time and being trained for water rescue. Unsure of the actual monthly cost to residents for a paid Fire Department, Mr. DeBlasio noted it as priceless for the residents. Council President Stabile recognized the need to have a surplus as you never know what a severe storm event may cost. Ms. Schaefer suggested publishing the flood siren alert information on the website. Mr. Hollod reported that the Construction Official would look to waive fees for repairs resulting from the flooding, requesting a resolution for same at the next meeting. Responding to Mr. Merrill, Mayor La Ronde

confirmed the use of two contractors to assist with cleanup which is compromised by the wait time to dump items.

3. **Chief William Parenti** – D.E.H. Chief Parenti recognized the support from the Mayor and Council shown to his department. The Chief recounted that Tropical Storm Ida dumped approximately nine inches of rain in just a matter of hours, leading to massive flooding throughout the Borough. Greenbrook Road by the High School was flooded severely with the bridge at Grove Street collapsing. Sixty-two vehicles have been towed. The Chief recommended providing emergency parking options for those residents in flood prone areas.

Chief Parenti then commented on the issues with speeding and vehicles with loud exhaust systems which is a problem state-wide. He then detailed the calls for service at the various liquor license establishments.

Ms. Corzo asked that a monthly police report be shared directly with the Council, to which the Chief replied that it appears on the website. Responding to Mr. Merrill's concerns with the number of incidents at the International Club, the Chief explained that the event featuring a hip-hop artist resulted in a shooting. The Chief assured that no more large-scale events would be held at their establishment. Council President Stabile recalled that the owner of the Quick-Chek parking lot formally objected to the renewal of their liquor license a few years back. Chief Parenti concurred, noting that several violations were discovered, but their license was renewed without conditions. Ms. Corzo asked about closing time at the various establishments with liquor licenses to which the Chief replied that it is mostly 2:00 a.m. There is a correlation between the closing hour and troubles, typically between 1:30 and 3:00 a.m., he added.

4. **Borough Hall Re-opening** – D.E.H. Mr. Hollod reported that Borough Hall had re-opened to the public on September 7 with hours of operation returning to 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. Everyone entering the building is required to wear a mask regardless of vaccine status. Employees are expected to wear masks when away from their work stations and assisting the public. The drop-box in the lobby remains available to residents 24/7. All employees are encouraged to get vaccinated, he concluded.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. **Short Term Rental Ordinance** – W.W.S. Ms. Schaefer announced that the ordinance was ready for introduction this evening.

REPORTS OF BOARDS, COMMITTEES, COMMISSIONS:

Ms. Corzo reported that the Planning Board had met August 25 to hear an Asian Food Market application for construction. It was determined that more information would be needed and discussion will continue at a later date.

Motion to adjourn by Ms. Miller, seconded by Ms. Corzo and carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 8:56 p.m.

Borough Clerk

Council President